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Review: The Ethics of the Climate Crisis

By Robin Attfield

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Attfield, R. *The Ethics of the Climate Crisis*. Cambridge, UK; Hoboken, NJ: Polity Press, 2024. 161 pp. ISBN: 1509559094 (paperback), $19.95. 9781509559107 (eBook), $16.00.

The *Ethics of the Climate Crisis* aims to present moral principles related to the current climate crisis as motivation for individuals, companies, non-governmental organizations, and governments at all levels to take on the ethical obligation of “climate action”. This argument addresses the escalation of global heating and the problems related to it due to human activities since 1850. The book’s accessible and conversational language makes it suitable for a wide audience, from college students and scholars to environmental technicians and private and public sector decision-makers.

Attfield’s work is well-organized, guiding the reader through significant scientific information in seven sections, each one followed by "Recommended reading” and “Further reading”. The chapters are divided into topics, giving the reader the opportunity to absorb their content in small, comprehensive segments. The empirical evidence on the climate crisis in the first two chapters provides the foundation for the book’s central thesis, considered in chapters four and five, which focus on ethics and justice towards contemporary and future generations, as well as to other species with whom humans share planet Earth. Attfield’s concluding arguments are expressed through the political implications related to the search for responses to the environmental crisis.

Thus, leaving from current aspects of the global environmental crisis, namely biodiversity loss and air pollution, the author intends to warn society about the importance of their participative role for effective policies to take place. The dangerous assumption that governments will solve environmental problems only by making agreements at international conferences without involving their populations and institutions has proved to be inefficient. That is Attfield calling for individual action, insisting that “... these duties have political implications, involving international collaboration [...] as well as implications for domestic policies.” (p. 4).

As for its purpose, *The Ethics of the Climate Crisis* reaches beyond informing and collecting updated data about climate change and its consequences. The book is successful in provoking the reader, regardless of background or level of ability, to feel responsible for their actions towards the environment. As recognized by the author, motivating “environmental action” among ordinary citizens depends on the individual

level of understanding about ethics and justice. This book is recommended to a general audience interested in current and future environmental affairs.

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